

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee
Minutes for March 19, 2003
Third Wednesday of the Month

Members present: Art Albrecht, Richard Baugh, Greg Coffman, Rudy Propst, Les Bolt, Joe Fitzgerald, Deb Stevens, and David Wiens. Kathy Sarver and Carl Wassum arrived late.

Members absent: Shelley Baker, Jim Huffman, Dorn Peterson, Robert Steere, Reg Foucar-Szocki.

Staff present: Stacy Turner, Director of Planning and Community Development; Earl W. Anderson, Senior Planner; and Keith Markel, Planner.

Staff called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in the absence of the committee chairman, vice chairman, and Planning Commission leadership.

Mr. Anderson welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) and then introduced Phoebe Kilby of Sympoetica, the lead consultant for the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Kilby said that planning staff would soon be getting an informational memorandum to the committee members highlighting the public participation component of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Anderson said that information would be sent out as soon as the participant numbers were finalized.

Ms. Kilby then introduced two consultants working on information for the City's Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Adrienne Brown of Economic Research Associates has drafted a report on the economic condition of the City. Ms. Martha Semmes has drafted a report on local demographics and housing issues.

Ms. Semmes presented her report first. She began by explaining that College towns have skewed demographics because of the large percentage of students who are counted as residents. She highlighted how the biggest change hit Harrisonburg when James Madison University went co-educational and grew rapidly. Another big change that has happened more recently is the large increase in the Hispanic population.

Mr. Coffman stated that he felt the Hispanic population was underrepresented in the Census data. He requested that the data from the school system's English as a Second Language (ESL) program be included as a table to show the demand for minority services, instead of the inaccurate Census data.

Ms. Semmes said that the ESL numbers would be included.

Both Ms. Semmes and Ms. Kilby said that census number would never be entirely accurate. This should not stop the committee from reviewing the information from the Census to look for trends, patterns and other relevant information. The CPAC must combine what they see in the Census with what they know to be true in the City to develop the most well rounded demographic information.

Many of the other committee members echoed their support and felt that across the board the Census figures were inaccurate.

Issues regarding "Section 8" housing were also discussed.

Ms. Semmes then completed going over the highlights of her report.

Ms. Adrienne Brown of Economic Research Associates then presented her report on the economic condition of Harrisonburg.

Ms. Kilby then spent a few minutes explaining the different maps that have been generated by the City's GIS department showing different land use and housing issues.

Mr. Anderson stated that the next regularly scheduled CPAC meeting is Wednesday, April 16th at 7:00p.m. The following week, on Wednesday the 23rd there is a special CPAC meeting scheduled to develop a list of goals taken from ideas generated during the community input meetings. Staff informed CPAC that the meeting conflicts with a state planning conference. The committee was asked if they would like to go ahead with the meeting without staff assistance, or would they like to reschedule. It was the consensus of the group to go ahead with the meeting on the 23rd.

He also announced that the Shenandoah Valley Home Builders Association has given the Community Development Department presentation space at their Home and Garden Show. The event will be held at James Madison University's Convocation Center on April 4th, 5th, and 6th. The organization has asked that the booth focus on the Comprehensive Plan Update. Staff distributed signup sheets for CPAC members to reserve time slots when they would man the booth to answer any questions the public might have.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.